



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Conviction

Defendant: James Roy Sylvester

SAGINAW DRUG TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO 35 YEARS

A Saginaw man convicted of multiple drug trafficking and firearms charges was sentenced to a total of 35 years in federal prison on May 22, 2006 by United States District Court Judge David M. Lawson in Bay City, Michigan.

James Roy Sylvester, 49, was convicted by a jury of multiple drug and gun-related charges on September 21, 2005. The convictions arose out of Sylvester's California-to-Michigan drug trafficking operations, which occurred while Sylvester was on parole after being released from state prison in 1998. Sylvester was arrested after receiving a five-kilo cocaine delivery on February 25, 2003 at the bus station in Saginaw, Michigan. Officers responding to the location where the drugs were to be delivered, a house on Jerome Street in Saginaw, were ambushed by individuals who were waiting at the house. In the ensuing gun battle, two law enforcement officers were injured and two of the attackers were killed. Sylvester was already in custody at the time of the attack.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Armed drug trafficking is a path with no way out other than violence or prison. This case could not have succeeded without the hard

work of many local, state and federal agencies, all of which deserve our community's thanks and support. I wish to commend in particular the courage of the two officers who were wounded in the line of duty during this investigation."

The investigation which led to the convictions for Sylvester and his co-defendants was conducted by a variety of law enforcement agencies, including the Saginaw, Michigan, Omaha, Nebraska and Los Angeles, California offices of the DEA; the Saginaw County Sheriff's Department; BAYONET (Bay Area Narcotics Enforcement Team); and the Michigan State Police. The Saginaw County Prosecutor's Office successfully prosecuted the surviving participants in the February 25, 2003 ambush and also forfeited tens of thousands of dollars in drug proceeds that had been seized from Sylvester, his mother, and various associated financial accounts.

Three of Sylvester's co-defendants in the federal case all previously pled guilty and received sentences ranging from probation to 135 months in prison. Two of those co-defendants were from California. The third, Sylvester's mother, was from Saginaw.

Sylvester's 35-year sentence was the result of multiple concurrent sentences of up to 360 months in custody, plus a mandatory consecutive sentence of 60 months which he received for possessing a firearm in connection with his drug trafficking operation. In addition to his conviction for conspiracy, Sylvester was also found guilty of trafficking in cocaine, crack cocaine, oxycondone (OxyContin), diazepam (Valium), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and possession of marijuana, being a felon in possession of a firearm, a user of an illegal controlled substances in possession of a firearm, and multiple counts of interstate travel in aid of his drug trafficking operation. Sylvester's criminal history included a prior conviction for murder. In imposing the sentence, the Court also considered Sylvester's leadership role in the conspiracy and his efforts to influence the testimony of his drug couriers at the trial.